1:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
SA19 Talamanca SA19

764

The final disposal of the remains is a matter of great care. The whole of the tribe goes to the district of Bri-bri for this purpose. The receptacle is a square pit, about four feet deep and ten feet square. This is paved on the bottom with stones, and is roofed over from the weather, by a series of heavy hewn slabs of a very durable wood, open on the front and ends, and sloping to the ground at the back. Each family possesses one of these pits and here, after the funeral feast, the bundle of bones is carried and deposited. After the rest, the remains of Santiago were carried to the "royal" pit and deposited without further ceremony.

The Cabecars, according to Mr. Lyon, have about the same ceremony, but their pits are mere holes, not paved, and covered by planks laid on the ground level.

The Tiribis have a death feast, but it differs in some respects from the others. The body is buried immediately after death, but no longer with the property of the deceased, and, of course, the defunct is not present at his final feast, as with the Bri-bris.

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Mr. Lyon, to whom I owe much of the information in the present memoir, has described to me one circumstance, in connection with these death feasts, that I have not witnessed. The warriors among the Bribris, who fought in the war with the Tiribis were honored with a little different ceremonial. They are now all gone, and the ceremony is extinct. At the death feast, a person entered, clad in a long gown, wig, and mask. The gown and wig were made of mastate, or bark cloth, covered with "old man's beard" moss, sewed all over it, making a shaggy and nearly shapeless mass. The mask was made of half a "tree calabash," properly fixed up with a wax nose, &c. A copy of this entire dress was made for me by an old Indian, and is now in the Smithsonian museum. The person thus accoutred, took part in the dance, made free with the women and scared the children without let or hindrance. Mothers with young children took them to him and placed them for a moment on his shoulder, "to prevent the evil spirit from doing them harm." Neither Lyon nor the Indians could give me a very clear account of what spirit, whether good or evil, this represented. But the people seemed to regard him as rather of the malevolent sort; to be classed under the general head of "*Bi*" or Devil. Doubtless this, at one time had a distinct meaning, now lost.

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No strictly religious belief can be said to exist among these Indians, in the sense that it is usually understood among us. They have, however, a series of ideas or beliefs which affect their daily lives and are never lost sight of. In connection with the funeral feast, described above, I have referred to their idea of a future state.

775

During the year that the body lies in the woods, the disembodied spirit prowls around, living on wild fruits, of which the wild cacao is the only one of which I know the name, although others were also pointed out to me. At the end of that time, when the funeral fire is kindled, the spirit is thus attracted to the feast, whence it departs on its final journey.

1:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
SA19 Talamanca SA19

622 301 to the reigning chief. The others were formerly also property of the chiefs, but are said to have been given as rewards of merit to the most [727] [422] successful leaders in the Tiribi war. The two belonging to the chief, as well as one belonging to the descendants of one of those warriors, all represent birds. The people call them eagles. The largest is between three and four inches across; the smaller of the chief's two, is double-headed. In connection with these "eagles" another royal emblem might 293 be mentioned. It is a staff of hard black palm wood, over four feet long. 622 The top is carved in the shape of an animal, not unlike a bear sitting on [532] his haunches. But there are no bears in this country, and it must have been intended for some other animal. Below this figure, the stick is square, and is carved out into four pillars several inches long, with spaces between them. In the interior, between them, is a cavity in which a loose piece of the same wood can be shaken about. It was evidently left there in the carving, after the fashion of the Chinese. Below this, the stick is plain. I tried every means in my power to obtain this, but could not buy it.

525 Games of chance or of skill are equally unknown, and even when brought into contact with civilization, they do not seem to take kindly to gambling. In fact, they have so little to win or lose, and that little is so easily obtained, that the inducement does not exist.

262 Their food is simple in material and there is but little variation in the manner of preparation. Of meats, besides chickens, they have beef and pork, [251] which are however rarely used except at feasts. They know nothing of salting meat for future use and can only consume one of these animals when a large number is together. Besides the scarcity of beef is so great that probably no Indian possesses more than one or two animals at a time. [224] Wild meat, like peccary, red monkey, (the other species are rarely eaten,) tapir, tiger, even otter, armadillo, and some other small animals are oc- [251] casionally shot. In this case, all of the meat that is not eaten at once is dried as hard as a bone, and perfectly black, in the smoke of a slow fire. Larger species of birds like curassow are also treated in the same way. It is an interesting fact, universally attested, that the bones of this bird are absolutely poisonous to dogs, while the meat, though tough, is not unpalatable and is perfectly innoxious to man. After a meal it is the never-failing custom to gather all the bones carefully, and either burn them or place them out of reach of the dogs. I do not know whether the flesh would be equally dangerous, though I doubt if it was ever wasted on a dog. This property is said to be due to some fruit or seed they eat. Of vegetable food, plaintains are the staple. In times of scarcity, bananas take their place, besides being eaten raw when ripe. The Indians also occasionally eat a raw ripe plantain, although they are coarse 252 and the flavor is inferior. The methods of preparation are, roasted green, when they make a poor substitute for bread; roasted ripe, when they are eaten with chocolate, with the idea of sweetening it. They are also boiled green, with meat, with green corn, or even alone. Ripe plan-

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri

231 Tame parrots, parrakeets, macaws, and other birds, or mammals, such as monkeys, screech at the visitor from a safe retreat in the rafters, and there is always a host of dogs to guard against.

342 Another, now uncommon, type of lodge is oval or round, a trifle larger and flatter than the form described. Its outer wall is only about four feet high, loosely built of sticks set up vertically and tied together. This type of lodge is light inside, but its sides are not tight; it has no raised floor, and no smoke-hole. The kitchen is always some distance from the door, and though never in the center of the building, is often at the end opposite from the entrance.

352 516 [532] In all the forms of lodges observed, there are many four-legged stools, sometimes roughly carved to imitate tortoises, and very long benches. The Bribri, when at home, never squat on the bare ground like their North American relatives, but each member of the family, including the youngest child, has his own seat.

342 The last type of Bribri house to be mentioned is the most striking. It is called today a "*palenque*," or "king's house," by

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri

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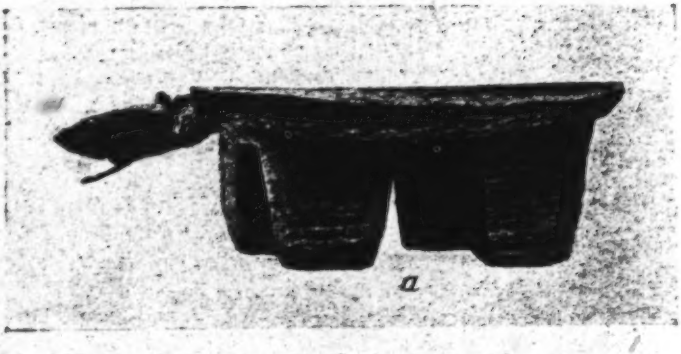

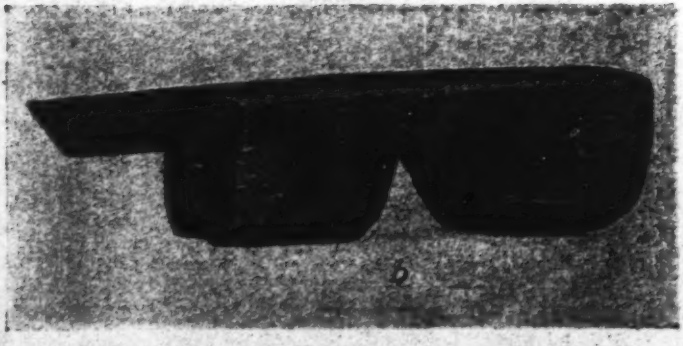

STOOLS CARVED TO REPRESENT THE TORTOISE

(Length: *a*, 11"; *b*, 12¾")

[Facing p. 53]

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri

Fig. 6, *b*, represents a bowl or cup marked with four T and Y shaped figures, while *a* of the same illustration shows a stellar design with a divided triangle on one side and a T figure on the other. 531 415

Fig. 7 is the most elaborately ornamented calabash bowl collected; it is decorated with [532]

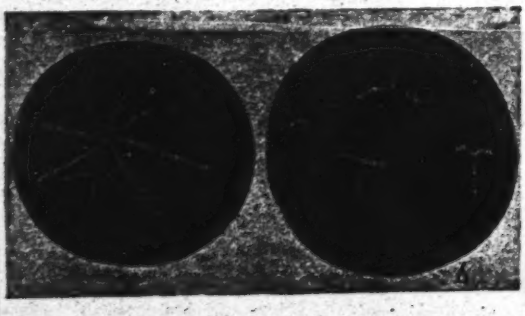

FIG. 6.—Decorated calabashes.

the figure of a steamship, anchored at both ends, and furnished with two nondescript flags, several fairly complicated geometrical figures, the date *1 Mayo*, and the initials *R. M.* Although not obtained from him, it is possible that this vessel may have been made by Ramon, the "king."

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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Bribri

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Another type of vessel is a sieve, or colander, made from the shell of a calabash, shown in pl. XIV, *a*. The rim is left intact, but the rest of the utensil is riddled with holes, though a suggestion of a pattern is

[531]
[532]

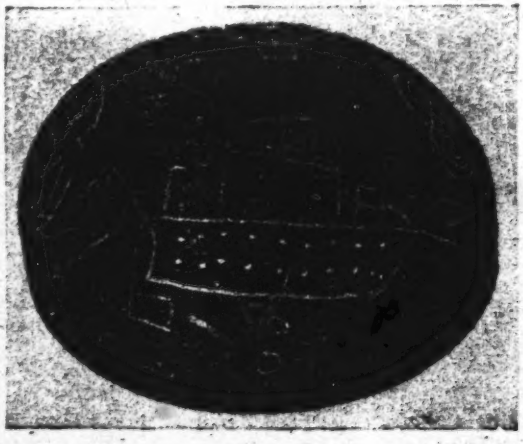

FIG. 7.—Decorated calabash receptacle.

left untouched. The rim bears some crude, etched figures, including one resembling a conventionalized butterfly. The calabash, where cracked, is laced together with fiber string passed through two holes bored in

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
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Bribri

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VARIOUS IMPLEMENTS

a, Planting dibble and war club, length 5'; *b*, Cacique stick, length 4' 1"; *c*, Blowgun, length 6' 10"; *d*, Bow, length 4' 10"

[Facing page 73]

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri

sometimes used. This is scraped over the rings with a large hard bean-like seed. It at least helps to add to the noise, if it does not contribute melody. A little flute, about as musical as a penny whistle, is sometimes added to the concert, though it seems rather to be looked upon as a toy. These flutes are made of a bone of some bird, perhaps a pelican. The bone has half-a-dozen holes drilled in it, and the end is plugged with wax, so as to direct the air to the larger aperture near the end. I bought one from a Tiribi made of a deer's bone. 534

"On very solemn occasions a curious box is also used. It is about eight inches long by four square on the end. It is carved out hollow, with a long tongue on one face, isolated by a U-shaped slit. A heavy handle is attached to one end, also carved out of the same block. When used, it is simply struck on the above mentioned tongue with a bone or piece of hard stick. This is only used on the death of a chief. There is but one in the tribe, and no bribe that I could offer sufficed to buy it."

Cacique Sticks.—These are long, cane-like staves, made of a dark, hard, heavy, reddish-brown wood called "cacique". As a rule they are entirely plain, but pl. XVII, *b*, exhibits an example of a type, now said to be obsolete, that has the figure of a man rudely carved on the handle. These canes are highly regarded, because of certain 293 [532] [757]

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri

293 757 astringent properties said to be contained in the wood, and they are sometimes scraped and the scrapings drunk with water as a curative. It is supposed to stop bleeding, and is also valued for intestinal ailments. [622] Formerly they may have been the property only of the headmen.

293 A stick once owned by Ramón's father, the old "king," was in the custody of Señor Alejo Jimenez, governor of Talamanca, who lives at Saporio. It was taken by the Bribri from a neighboring tribe, probably the Tiribi, in war, many years ago, and the Indians are very anxious lest it should pass out of their hands, since they say, "it cost us blood." This staff was seen by Gabb,[16] who states:

[532] "It is a staff of hard black palm wood, over four feet long. The top is carved in the shape of an animal, not unlike a bear sitting on his haunches. But there are no bears in this country, and it must have been intended for some other animal. Below this figure the stick is square, and is carved out into four pillars several inches long, with spaces between them. In the interior, between them, is a cavity in which a loose piece of the same wood can be shaken about. It was evidently left there in the carv-

2:Skinner E-5 (1917) 1920
SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri

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MASK AND DANCE DRESS COLLECTED BY W. M. GABB
(Courtesy of the U. S. National Museum)

[facing p. 101]

tired of playing, one of the spotted tigers killed her, and they all ate her, all of her, until not even a drop of blood was left to tell the tale. 539

The watcher was so frightened that he could not get down from the tree until the following day. The rest of the tribe also came at daybreak to find and to talk to him who had witnessed the death of the woman who because she became pregnant by her brother furnished the example for the law that whoever should copy this act would be severely punished.

THE ARTS

contact with the Chiriquíans. The *zambombia* is a hollowed stick divided inside into separate compartments. The divisions are made with pieces of the pejibaye palm. The same black seeds used in the *maracas* are put in these compartments, and the *zambombia* is moved backward and forward to produce noise. In the village there is one accordion which also is played at celebrations. 534

The music on these occasions is almost entirely copied from the Chiriquíans who in turn have received a considerable negro influence. Waltzes are also popular, and some foxtrots are heard. 533 [177]

Dancing. The *Boruca* are said to have secret dances. Their two public dances, if so they may be called, that are not copied from the Chiriquíans, are the "bullfight" and the *negritos*. The "bullfight" takes place on New Year's Day. A balsa (*Ochroma Lagopus* Sw.) mask of a huge bull's head painted in black with white lines, and with the horns and the upper part of the skull from a real bull, is put over a framework of a curved piece of wood that has a supporting wooden cross piece. This helps the whole to project from the head of the wearer in the manner of a real bull's head. The mask is usually worn by one of the young bloods of the village. Another man wears a balsa mask of one face with a little face on the chin, suggesting a dual personification (see fig. 10, *b*). These are the only two "characters." Almost all the men in the village, however, put on balsa masks of various types, some with gaily colored paper pasted on the surface, some painted, and some perfectly plain. The 535 [532]

3:Stone E-5 (1945) 1949

SA19 Talamanca SA19
Boruca

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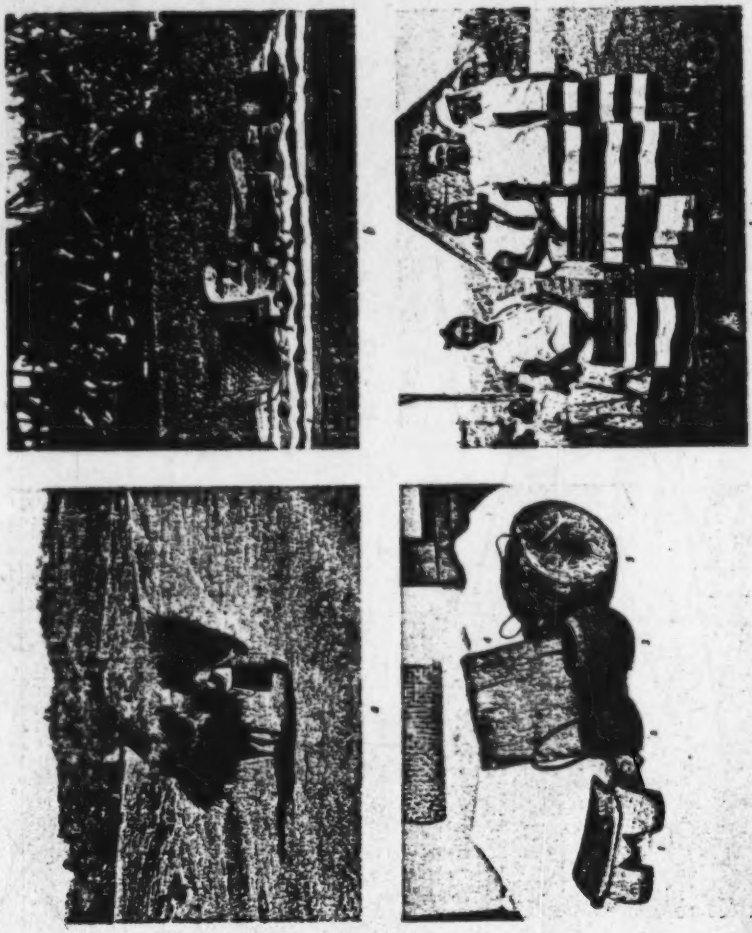

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4, Ox and Indian woman laden with grasses for a roof. A, Artifacts of the Bribri: 1, mano or skirt; 2, hoe; 3, doll; 4, maracas or rattles; 5, mask; 6, four-legged stool; 7, man's belt; 8, sieve. 5, Artifacts of the Bribri: 1, four-legged stool with head and tail; 2, basket; 3, sieve; 4, bark cloth; 5, drum. 6, Women wearing the mano, or skirt, and blouse.

[p.57]

3:Stone E-5 (1945) 1949

SA19 Talamanca SA19
Boruca

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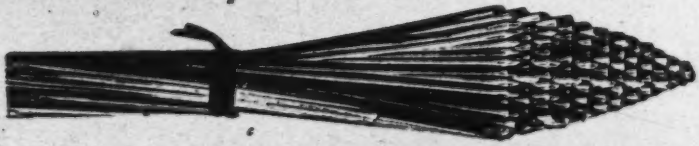

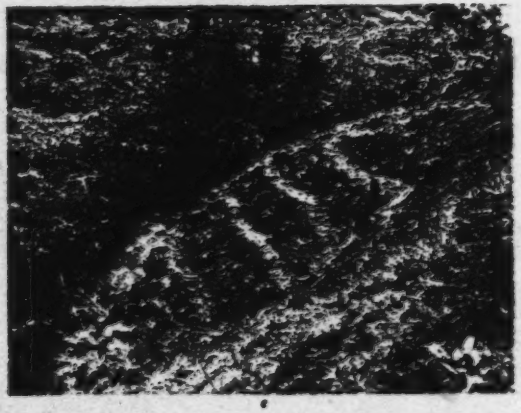

a, Funeral of a woman. b, Mask used in New Year's celebration. c, Straw mouse (⅔ actual size). d, Rattles or maracas with bone handles. e, Remains of common agriculture on the savanna.

[p. 60]

[P. 46(A)] SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri
Cabecar

756 him. Both benches had four feet, but one had
[352] a protruding tail and head with a red spot.
[592] The two men then went outside and the chief doctor closed the door to keep others away. From within, one could hear the elder man's voice in a song which gradually became louder and louder.

According to custom, they sat on benches in front of the house and the head man sang to the novice. Two of the assistant medicine men went out to watch for the sunrise so that they could warn the chief that it was time to put the novice back in the hut.

When they came in, the aspirant took off his white blanket. The head medicine man took the feathers from the first carrying bag which was still on the low bench, some stones, a staff,
[534] a jaguar skin, a long reed flute (*kuLu*) which only the medicine men can make and put these things in the leaf room. The two new benches were not included. Then the head man entered with the aspirant to arrange the details. When he came out, he said to the novice who remained inside, "You do not have permission to sleep, not even a little."

The aspirant had to stay in the room all the following day without sleeping because to be a doctor he must show his power of self control. In fact, this endurance test was explained by a simple question: if a medicine man were to have a very sick patient and fell asleep, what would happen?

The drinks and food were now passed for the fourth time with the same ceremony as
[534] before. Then the head man blew a conch-shell horn right by the novice's wall and pushed the leaves. This was to be certain that he was not dozing. The aspirant was forbidden to talk, but he answered by blowing at times a conch-shell horn and at others a flute. Every now and then the other medicine men would poke their staffs at the wall and receive a blown attestation of his wakefulness or a knock. This continued throughout the day.

At night the ordeal ended and the novice could leave his leaf compartment and take his stones. However, he had to wait four days before he could finish the mouth-washing ceremony and become in truth a *jawá*.

758 **Sickness.** On the Caribbean side, but less often on the Pacific, a lean-to for a sick person is made of *pejibaye* leaves at one end of the

example, *buréte* is performed by a line of men; *busiki* is with men and women in the same line; *buLtakuLe* is usually a line of men but there may be one of women. When one sex dances, the arm is interlocked at the elbow with the next in line. Women and men put their hand on the shoulder of the person in front. The single line step is the first one used in the circle dance. Twenty people or less participate in these lines. The drum is held under the arms of the male dancers. Females do not play them.

The common dances among the Bribri are those of the buzzard and the monkey. Each has its own explanation. The first one is said to have originated because the boss of the buzzards went to *sibu* to learn to sing and dance. He learned and came to earth wearing a collar and showed man how to sing and dance (*see* Theological Myths: *The Dance*). Some versions hold that it was *sibu* himself in the form of a buzzard who did this and not the boss of these birds. He wore a collar and taught human beings to dance in a circle because the buzzards after eating fly in a circle.[206] When he finished his task, he retired to where the sun lives.

The monkey dance is supposed to have been taught to man by the grandfather of the Congo monkey who learned this from *sibu*. Its prime purpose is to have man happy (*see* Lay Songs: *buL-ikLək*).

Another celebration to do with happiness and good luck is seen in Talamanca among the Bribri when a new home is to be occupied.

The whole ceremony is known as *itsǫ́* (*see* Songs), taking its name from the *disaplina* palm (*itsǫ́* or *kǫmat* in Bribri; *Chamaedorea* sp.) from which the mask is made today. The beard of the face is Spanish moss. After the inauguration of a house, the mask, which is supposed to assure the longevity of the family who are to inhabit the new home, is hidden and the celebrants have to hunt for it before the dance can be performed.

Segarra and Julía[207] describe a hunter's

[206] This interpretation of God in buzzard form wearing a collar is reflected in the gold figures found in ancient graves. The style and form of the collars associated with these figures are similar to the bead ones used today by the Guaymí Indians of northwestern Panama.

6: Stone E-5 (1956-1959) 1962

SA19 Talamanca SA19
Cabecar
Bribri

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778
[172]

a

b

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789
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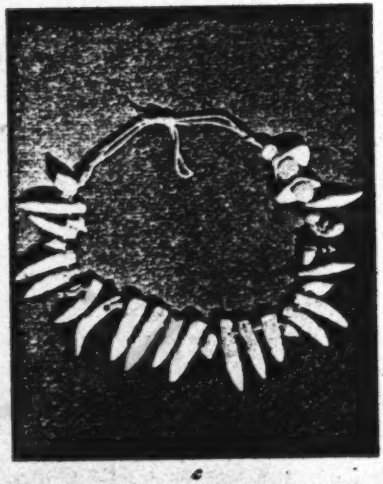

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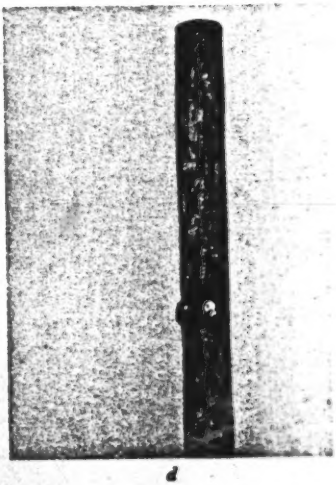

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a, Ceremonial staff from cache on slopes of Irazú volcano, Central Plateau. b, Ceremonial staff from Talamanca, late 19th century (property of Don Otón Jiménez L.). c, Cabécar necklace of jaguar teeth, shells, bone, and beads to ward off evil (property of Don Julio Callejas T.). d, Part of Cabécar blow gun with beetle sights.

[END PLATE 11]